(b) Does not arise.

(c) During the last year (2004-05) there was no rail/road transport through trade channel scheme.

Wrong billing of telephones in Bilaspur

†3108. SHRIMATI KAMLA MANHAR : Will the Minister of - COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the people at large are facing great difficulty due to the long waiting list of WLL connections in rural areas of the country and delivery of wrong bills of telephones installed under WLL service;

(b) whether it is also a fact that more such complaints are being received from Bilaspur area of Chhattisgarh State; and

(c) if so, the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) BSNL maintains waiting list for fixed line connections. WLL connections are provided for those waitlisted applicants for fixed lines who are residing in remote areas more than 5Km from an exchange and in terrain suitable for WLL. No difficulties have been reported due to incorrect billing of WLL telephone connections in the country;

(b) 11 complaints were received in Bilaspur area during the year 2004-05, till 15.02.2005. All have been settled and none is pending.

(c) Bills are being issued as per normal schedule. Efforts are made to settle the complaints, if any, promptly.

Privatisation of post offices

3109. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to permit private operators to run post offices in rural areas and in the regions where there are very few post offices;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is the motivation of Government to slowly privatise post offices which have served so well the poor and middle class people; and

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) if so, the details thereof and the justifications therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) There is a proposal to franchise basic postal services in locations where it is not possible to provide a post office.

(b) This proposal is in consonance with the policy directive under the 10th Plan, to explore more cost-effective means of providing basic postal facilities and reduce dependence on budgetary support in order to achieve financial self-sufficiency. Details of the franchisee scheme are yet to be firmed up.

(c) and (d) There is no proposal to privatize postal services. India has the largest Postal network in the world of which 89% is in the rural areas. The entire rural network is subsidized to the extent of 66 2/3% to 85%. given the mandate of fulfilling the Universal Service Obligation while functioning commercially and achieving financial self-sufficiency, the only option available is to identify more self-sustainable models for catering to those areas which need post office facility, but cannot justify one, as per the prescribed norms.

Provision of computer and internet in the villages

†3110. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of States/villages in the country where Government have extended the facilities of computer and internet;

(b) the number of villages in the country where this facility has not been extended, so far; and

(c) the necessary steps being taken by Government to extend this facility in all the villages of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) to (c) Department of Information Technology (DIT) through National Informatics Centre (NIC) is providing e-governance support and NICNET backone to Central Government Department, States/UTs and District Administrations in the country. Computers & Internet connectivity

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.